

# CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES

## COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

### Mission

The Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture cultivates a sustainable and supportive environment for the arts and enlivens public space with accessible creative experiences to strengthen and enrich our community, create opportunities for artists, and invigorate the local economy.

### Operations

ACAC is an umbrella organization including the following:

- Grants Committee (formerly the Arlington Cultural Council)
- Community Engagement Committee (formerly two separate committees, Public Art and Programs & Festivals)
- Cultural District Managing Partnership (CDMP)
- Representative of non-profit arts community from Arlington Center for the Arts
- Representative of business community from the Chamber of Commerce
- Representative of the local community of working artists, elected by ArtLinks
- Representative appointed by the School Committee
- Liaison from the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD)
- And 3 at-large members
- Liaison to the Poet Laureate Committee



In fiscal year 2020, ACAC leveraged a \$35,000 allocation from the Town to raise an additional \$27,193\* toward local arts and culture programming and infrastructure. In addition, the Grants Committee of ACAC administered \$16,000 in grants to local artists and arts organizations, for a total of \$43,193 of additional funding coming into the Town of Arlington to support audience experiences, local artists and arts and culture organizations, and local businesses by attracting potential customers to Arlington. ACAC works closely with the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) and employs two part-time contractors, a marketing coordinator who promotes

Arlington-based arts and culture activities, and a public art curator focused on community engagement.

While the focus of this report is ACAC's work, it's important to note that ACAC is one part of a diverse community of arts and culture non-profits, for-profits, and individual artists striving to help Arlington thrive. During the pandemic, a key focus has been building infrastructure; amplifying messages of community, solidarity and safety; and serving as a resource and facilitator connecting state and municipal entities, businesses, organizations and artists for mutual support.



In 2020, some aspects of ACAC's strategic plan (see [ArtsArlington.org/About-Us/](https://ArtsArlington.org/About-Us/)) were significantly impacted by the pandemic, and ACAC spent much of Q2 retooling its programming schedule, operations plan, and communications channels. ACAC helped connect local businessowners and artists to create an impactful installation at Arlington Service Station (above) to promote mask-wearing and thank essential workers -- an effort spotlighted statewide by MassCreative as a model of effectively fostering municipal, cultural, and business sector partnerships to enrich neighborhoods through art.

Late summer and fall saw a proliferation of new art in public spaces including Walking Poetry; APS Youth Banners on Mass Ave; Go Out Doors - Neighbors,



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previewing a collaborative regional exhibition engaging towns throughout Greater Boston and Metrowest; mural, banner and window art to enliven three new Town parklets; resident-created Sidewalk Haiku in East Arlington; extension of the Arboreal Attire sculptures at Jason Russell House in partnership with the Arlington Historical Society; and Pathways installations by Christopher Frost, Resa Blatman and Michelle Lougee



on the Bikeway.

Overcoming enormous hurdles, the Town's first artist-in-residence - Michelle Lougee - and public art curator Cecily Miller completely retooled what was to be a highly interactive community-sourced Pathways project. In-person workshops were replaced by a highly effective virtual network of volunteer "craftivists" asynchronously co-creating materials for a huge 37-piece sculptural installation on the Bikeway - subject of a major feature in *The Boston Globe*. Called *Persistence: A Community Response to Pervasive Plastic*, the exhibit will be on view through October 2021 with programming planned through the Spring and Summer.

Similarly, the canceled Fox Festival Parade was re-envisioned as a virtual "Fox and Owl Festival" - a DIY art challenge engaging families in creating pictures and



videos at home to share online.

ACAC's ArtsArlington.org website, newsletter, and other communications channels remain a valuable resource for audience members discovering, and artists and arts organizations promoting, cultural activities. Despite a huge reduction in linking and content due to COVID-19, in 2020 website, newsletter, and social media traffic remained approximately level with the program-rich 2019.

Continuing to pursue its strategy to promote Arlington as a cultural destination, ACAC continued to diversify and grow its out-of-town audiences; 58% of its in-state web traffic came from outside of Arlington, and indeed, 28% of total U.S. web traffic came from 46 other states. Meanwhile, ACAC doubled its newsletter publication, and expanded its ArtsArlington brand to Instagram, Twitter, an interactive new Facebook discussion group and a new online auction platform. Virtual platforms enabled participants in public art workshops from as far away as Louisiana, and donors to bid in a fundraiser while traveling or quarantined.

ACAC is striving to diversify its audiences and participants, creating a taskforce to promote its Cultural Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility goals; recruiting several



new Commissioners and sub-committee members; and widening its regional media reach. ACAC programs have been featured in *The Boston Globe*, YourArlington.com, the *Advocate*, *Artscope*, *Art New England*, statewide tourism and arts media, and in several cultural updates on *ACMI News* and *Talk of the Town*. As one marked result, ArtsArlington's audience age demographics have shifted dramatically compared to past years, with significant increases in both younger (18-34) and older (over 55) visitors.

The Cultural District Managing Partnership contracted a local historian and digital production team to create a new walking tour of cultural district highlights, promoting tourism both through self-guided digital tours and eventual in-person tours. The tour will be available in Spring 2021.

The ACAC Grants Committee, a local council of the MCC, a state agency, received 41 applications, an increase of over 33% over 2019 applications, and funded 19 projects. Many of the grant recipients creatively pivoted their 2020 projects to online content and platforms due to Covid-19 restrictions on community spaces and events, providing continuity and accessibility to the programming funded by the Grants Committee.

Working with the Town, ACAC has advocated for artists on topics from studio space to COVID relief funding to temporary use of parks for arts instruction. The ArtLinks network has continued to provide monthly professional development opportunities and increase par-

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ticipation; its members list has grown to 190 and its private Facebook group now numbers over 310 followers.

ACAC had embarked on a strategy to expand collaborative program partnerships with organizations town-wide. A pre-COVID nonprofit summit at Old Schwamb Mill resulted in a Town Volunteer Fair, co-hosted with the Chamber of Commerce at the Masonic Temple. Drawing hundreds of visitors, the Fair featured performances



by Poet Laureate Steven Ratiner and multiple APS performing groups. Recognizing March as national Music in Our Schools month, APS educators Jing-Huey Wei, Paula Demetrio and Gregory Condakes was each honored with commendations from Representative Sean Garballey for work “as an Educator, Mentor and Leader, Skill as an Artist, and the Contribution You and Your Students Make to Arlington.” Two more nonprofit support convenings have since been held on Zoom.



Just a sampling of other partnerships include: Presenting the Poet Laureate’s Red Letter Poems Project, featured in *The Boston Globe*, with the Arlington Public Libraries and Arlington Center for the Arts; helping AHRC promote their Juneteenth Celebration and Black History Month art banners project; serving as regional partner of #ArtWeekMA; and participating in or collaborating with Amazing Arlington, AHNAPIC, Economic Recovery Task Force, DPW, AHS Black Alumni, Arlington Tourism and Economic Development, and East Arlington Business Cooperative projects.

### HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

The Historic Districts Act, M.G.L. Chapter 40C, was created to protect and preserve the historic resources of the Commonwealth through a local review system that encourages and ensures compatible improvement and development. Over 340 Local Historic Commissions across Massachusetts are already established and working closely with the Massachusetts Historical Commission. They serve as local preservation advocates and as an important resource for information about their community’s cultural resources and preservation activities.

Arlington has seven established historic districts that include approximately 351 properties that the community has recognized as unique resources worthy of protection. The seven districts and the dates they were established or most recently enlarged are: Avon Place, 1996; Broadway, 1991; Central Street, 1982; Jason/Gray, 1998; Mount Gilboa/Crescent Hill, 1991; Pleasant Street, 2006; and Russell, 1983.

The Arlington Historic District Commissions (AHDC) are required by law to review the architectural appropriateness of most proposed exterior design changes, whether they be a minor alteration, new additions or structures. Each Commission consists of qualified volunteers appointed by the Select Board and always includes a property owner or resident of each District (if one is willing to serve), an architect, a real estate professional, and a representative from the Arlington Historical Society.

During 2020 the Commissions met sixteen (16) times to hold hearings for property owners seeking approval for certificates for exterior work to be conducted on their properties or to discuss ongoing litigation. During the year they entered into Executive Session two (2) times to discuss pending or ongoing litigation. Part of the regular meetings included thirteen (13) Informal Hearings held for property owners seeking advice or resource information for work to be conducted and twenty-three (23) Formal Hearings. As a result of those meetings and additional CONA applications not requiring a hearing, twenty-eight (28) Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) and thirty-six (36) Certificates of Non-Applicability (CONA) to be undertaken were granted. In addition, there were two (2) Application Denials issued.

During the year the Commissioners worked on updating their Design Guidelines and figuring out how to offer remote meetings on Zoom due to the pandemic. Meetings were cancelled in March and April but regular meetings resumed in May with the addition of a second monthly meeting and a time constraint of 2 hours was eventually added for each meeting to help prevent Zoom fatigue.

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## HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) was established in 1970 as the Town agency responsible for community-wide preservation planning as described in Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 8D.

The Commission is an advocate for historic preservation in Arlington and;

- Encourages appropriate maintenance and restoration of the Town's historic structures and open spaces.
- Educates and advises municipal departments, boards, commissions, and citizens on historic preservation and the significance of Arlington's historic buildings, landscapes, other historic objects, and landmarks.
- Provides guidance and advice to owners of historically significant properties.
- Participates in the management and maintenance of historic resources owned by the Town, e.g., Arlington Town Hall, the Whittemore-Robbins House.

In addition, the Commission reviews and acts upon any applications for building permits that involve changes to historically or architecturally significant structures in Arlington under the Town's demolition-delay bylaw.

To accomplish these goals, the Commission maintains Arlington's *Inventory of Historically and/or Architecturally Significant Properties* and administers the demolition delay bylaw through formal public hearings and informal meetings with owners of inventoried properties.

Due to the coronavirus shutdown, the Historical Commission did not meet in April and May, 2020 and has met via Zoom since June, 2020.

### Hearings and Property Monitoring

The Commission conducted formal hearings for thirteen inventoried properties in 2020: 20 Bartlett Avenue, 45 Bartlett Avenue, 18 Churchill Avenue, 18 Claremont, 51 Grove Street (Public Works Yard), 65 Lancaster Road, 476 Massachusetts Avenue, 83 Orvis Road, 18 Robin Hood Road, 38 Teel Street, 7 Village Lane, 58 Warren Street, 15 Whittemore Street.

Monitored properties included the ones listed above plus: 36 Draper Avenue, 32 Kensington Road, 44 Kensington Road, 44 Lockland Avenue, 81 Hillside Avenue, 3-11 Lakeview Street, 418 Massachusetts Avenue, 47 Mystic Lake Drive, 21 Teel Street, (preferentially preserved), 151 Warren Street, Whittemore Park.

In addition to property hearings, the Commission held formal hearings for approval of new signs in the Arlington Center National Register Historic District, - 478 Massachusetts Avenue, 683 Massachusetts Avenue. In the Arlington Heights Historical District a sign hearing was held for 71 Park Avenue.

Discussions were held for 2252 Gray Street, 295 Lake Street, 1165R Massachusetts Avenue (Theodore Schwamb Mill), 4-6 Newman Way, and 3 Robin Hood Road.

### Arlington Community Preservation Act (CPA)

The Historical Commission is actively supporting historic preservation grants approved by the CPA Committee and Town Meeting in 2019 and 2020. CPA-funded projects include the Jason Russell House, the Whittemore-Robbins Cottage, and the preservation of the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden.

### Historic Markers

The historic house marker program is for all Arlington properties on the *Inventory*. Each plaque displays the year the property was built and a historic house name, if any.

### Website

The Commission continues to maintain its own website that provides a copy of the *Inventory of Historically and/or Architecturally Significant Properties* and describes the process for hearings before the Commission as well as listing our publications and projects. [www.arlingtonhistoricalcommission.org](http://www.arlingtonhistoricalcommission.org).

### Education and Outreach

Throughout the year Commissioners participate in activities that educate and inform citizens about historic preservation. Due to the pandemic, these activities were suspended.

### Other Activities

The Commission continues to work with other Town agencies on the maintenance and restoration of the Whittemore-Robbins House and its outbuildings, the Robbins Library, the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden, the Town Hall and its grounds.

Commissioners represented the Historical Commission on various municipal boards and historic organizations in Arlington, including the Arlington Preservation Fund (Patrick Guthrie and Dianne Schaefer) the Arlington Historical Society (Pamela Meister), and the Arlington Community Preservation Act Committee (JoAnn Robinson).

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## CYRUS E. DALLIN ART MUSEUM BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Cyrus Dallin Art Museum promotes new insights into our shared history by exploring the life, work, and values of this celebrated sculptor of Arlington. The Museum's mission is deeply informed by Cyrus Dallin's commitment to artistic expression, education and social justice. The museum makes art accessible to all and provides opportunities for learning and exploration.

Prior to the mid-March closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Museum visitor numbers were up forty-one percent from the same period in 2019. Like other local businesses and non-profit organizations, the Board of Trustees looked to new ways that to provide services to members and visitors. The public meetings of the Board were held by remote participation via Zoom. The museum launched an online Virtual Tour produced by Blue Immersive Media. This 360-degree virtual walk through the museum galleries is supplemented with historical information and archival photographs. Online educational resources for children studying from home during the shut down were uploaded to the website. These include Picture Bingo, Memory Game, instructions for making Modeling Dough, and an Arlington Center Dallin Walking Tour.

In the fall, in-person small group tours for three to four people resumed and there was immediate and positive response by visitors waiting to return to the museum. These tours are currently on hold again during an increase in COVID cases in the area. Tours are tailored for adults and children with consideration for each group's area of special interest.

*Introductory view of the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum's Virtual Tour produced by Blue Immersive Media.*



### 2020 Achievements

- Launched an online Virtual Tour and made Virtual Learning resources available on the website.
- Acquired a sixteen-inch rare Gorham bronze cast of Dallin's *Medicine Man* as a future bequest and purchased an eight-inch bronze cast of *Signal of Peace*. These pieces represent important additions to the collection.
- Formed a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I)

committee to develop new organizational goals and a formal statement. Partnered with the Massachusetts Tribe to write a Land Acknowledgement Statement. Collaborated with the Arlington Human Rights Commission (AHRC) on a panel discussion about Native American imagery in society. Embarked on a "Learning Journey" to engage with BIPOC artists, curators and cultural leaders to develop better understanding of DE&I issues as they relate to museums. Spoke in support of AHRC's Indigenous Peoples Day proclamation to the Select Board.

- Established a YouTube channel where past programs, feature videos, and news pieces can be viewed.
- Produced a new interpretive panel explaining the fifty-seven year quest by Dallin to complete the *Paul Revere Monument*.



(left) *Medicine Man*, c. 1918, bronze  
(right) *Signal of Peace*, c. 1930, bronze

### 2020 Activities and Programs

- Hosted sixteen local children for a Kids Sculpture Workshop including a gallery tour and hands-on creative learning of sculpting techniques.
- Completed a grant from the Arlington Cultural Commission with an online program to unveil the cleaned and restored French landscape painting by Dallin, entitled "Village Road, Auvers-sur-Oise."
- Participated in feature programming of NewTV (Newton, Mass.) with a behind-the-scenes tour, history, and discussion about the museum's founding and current activities.
- Attended the Arlington Volunteer Fair to provide information about volunteer opportunities at the Museum.

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Local children enjoy hands-on sculpting workshop and tour in February 2020.

### Future Goals

- Re-open for in-person tours and programming.
- Continue online programming measures as a way of reaching new and expanded audiences.
- Build relationships with Indigenous communities locally and in Utah to learn more about the Native American cultures and initiatives.
- Seek funding for the interior restoration of the Jefferson Cutter House.

### Recognizing Museum Founders

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce recognized James McGough and Geri Tremblay as Citizens of the Year in early 2020. Recipients of this award have demonstrated outstanding community leadership and citizenship and have improved the overall quality of life in Arlington through their work. Over thirty years ago James and Geri began working together to make the Dallin Museum a reality. Today they show no signs of slowing down. Jim continues to

attend municipal board meetings as Trustee Emeritus and Volunteer Docent Coordinator. One of his most enduring legacies will be the thousands of visitors he has converted into lifelong Cyrus Dallin fans with his infectious enthusiasm and engaging stories. When Geri retired from teaching, she embraced a new role as a full-time volunteer for the Dallin Museum. She serves on both the nonprofit and municipal boards. She plays a crucial role in every aspect of the Museum's operations, from collections cataloging and research, to education programming and strategic planning. Geri has developed lasting friendships with the Dallin family, sharing the Museum as a resource to connect them through their family history.



Geri Tremblay and James McGough (center) receive Citizens of the Year award from David Swanson (far left) and Beth Locke (far right) of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce.

